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RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000050

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TAGS: [EWWT](#) [KU](#) [MARR](#) [MCAP](#) [MOPS](#) [PBTS](#) [PINS](#) [PNAT](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: SEEKING KUWAITI CONCURRENCE ON MNF-I SALVAGE
OPERATIONS

REF: A. 07BAGHDAD 4136
[1](#)B. KUWAIT 0015

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request, please see paragraph 7.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary. On December 18, 2007, the Kuwaiti Navy ordered two vessels contracted by the Multi-National Force in Iraq (MNF-I) to depart disputed waters in the Khawr Abd Allah (KAA) waterway. These contracted vessels were surveying two submerged shipwrecks for eventual removal. Embassy Kuwait delivered a diplomatic note on December 26 to the GOK requesting concurrence to allow the ships to return to recover lost equipment and complete their mission. Delay costs since December 18 are about \$2 million, roughly half of the entire contract allocation for this survey mission. Embassy Baghdad requests the Department bring this issue to the attention of the Kuwaiti Ambassador in Washington in order to get a positive response to the diplomatic note. End Summary.

Incident Background

[1](#)3. (C) On December 18, the Kuwaiti Navy ordered two vessels contracted by the MNF-I to immediately depart from their anchored position in disputed waters in the Khawr Abd Allah (KAA) waterway. The Captain was forced to cut anchors and cables which secured the diving platform to the seabed in order to comply with the Kuwaiti navy request and avoid boarding (Reftel A). The ship was contracted by MNF-I to undertake a detailed survey of two submerged wrecked ships which pose a significant navigation hazard. This is a required step prior to MNF-I planned operations for their eventual removal.

[1](#)4. (C) Embassy Kuwait subsequently delivered a diplomatic note to the GOK requesting concurrence for the ships to return to the disputed area, retrieve the lost anchors and cables, and complete their survey mission. On December 31, Embassy Kuwait CDA met with MFA U/S Al-Jarallah for follow-on discussions about this request. While supportive, the U/S told CDA that the issue had been referred to the MOI (Reftel B).

Not About Disputed Waters

[1](#)5. (C) Although the Captain believed he was in Iraqi waters at the time of the incident, his stated geographical position appears to be in disputed waters between Kuwait and Iraq. For the purpose of this wreckage survey, however, it is not

necessary or desirable for the U.S. to be drawn into the territorial dispute.

Delay Costs

¶6. (C) Estimated delay cost is about \$100,000 per day or--to date--about \$2 million. For the entire survey operation, MNF-I allocated \$4 million from the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP), i.e. delay costs alone have now consumed over half of this allocation and further delays threaten to deplete the remaining funds.

Action Request

¶7. (C) In support of Embassy Kuwait's efforts to resolve this issue, Post requests the Department bring this issue to the attention of the Kuwaiti Ambassador in Washington at the earliest opportunity in order to reiterate to the GOK the importance of obtaining a response to the U.S. diplomatic note delivered on December 26 and the subsequent request made by CDA on December 31 to permit the survey ship to return to the survey site. The following points are provided for use.

(BEGIN POINTS)

- We want to bring to your attention an important matter regarding a survey ship that was conducting surveying operations in the Khawr Abd Allah (KAA) waterway December 18 but was intercepted by Kuwaiti Naval and Air Forces, which ordered the ship out of the area.

BAGHDAD 00000050 002 OF 002

- The survey ship was contracted by the USG for the purpose of surveying two submerged wrecks in the KAA for subsequent removal.

- These submerged wrecks pose a significant navigational hazard to the ships of all nations--including Kuwait--that traverse the KAA.

- Unimpeded access to Umm Qasr will provide expanded trade opportunities and economic benefits for the entire region.

- The USG requests GOK concurrence to proceed back to this site to retrieve equipment (primarily anchors and cables) left during the departure on December 18 and allow the vessels to complete their survey mission without interference.

- Our survey mission is transparent; we are prepared to remain in close contact with the GOK during the remainder of the mission, including hosting Kuwaiti observers.

- The USG requests GOK support for the overall mission of removing these wrecked ships, which will benefit all maritime vessels.

If raised:

- Although there may have been some initial confusion by the GOK on December 18 about the purpose and identity of the two survey vessels in the KAA, subsequent discussions between U.S. Embassy Kuwait and GOK have made it clear these are USG-contracted vessels.

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